

CLOCK STEPPING



Daily living happens in all directions. Falls can also happen in any direction. Hence, multidirectional stepping and lunges are valuable for maintaining everyday balance. Clock Stepping involves a series of lunges to various points of an imagined clock. Lunge size, depth, and hand position can all be varied to suit various goals and abilities.

Benefits »

- ⦿ Strengthens the whole leg (especially the abductors) in functional movement patterns.
- ⦿ Requires balance recovery from multiple directions.
- ⦿ Combines with upper body movement for greater balance challenge.
- ⦿ Uses a familiar icon (a clock) as a visual tool.
- ⦿ Requires thinking and memory.

Set It Up »

You will not have to have any special equipment for this exercise. When training just one person, you can use agility discs as the numbers on a clock. Their job will be to step to the number you indicate. How clock stepping works best: You will be calling out easy positions first. Easiest numbers are on the top half of the clock. Repeat each position two to four times in a row, before moving on to a new number. It's best to do just one leg at a time. Call out each number for one leg. Then have them move to the other side of the chair and you call out each number for the other leg. Eventually you will call out numbers randomly with no return to center between the numbers. After that you can add arm reaching along with the stepping.

How to Do It »

The Start

- ⦿ Participants stand tall at the right side or back of their chair, hips in line with chair back. Their left leg and arm are next to the chair. They should keep their left hand on the chair back for balance safety.
- ⦿ Have participants imagine they are standing at the center of a big clock. Can they picture these times: 9 o'clock? 1 o'clock? 5 o'clock? Dinner time? Nap time? TV news time?



The Moves

- ⊙ Call out these types of cues:
 - Step the right leg out to the 9 o'clock position.
 - Don't just touch it with your right foot; actually transfer your weight to that foot. Let your knee bend some as it takes on your body weight. Good job!
 - Now return to center position: Push! Push with that leg to bring it back to the center of the imaginary clock.
- ⊙ Repeat this first position three or four times until participants are comfortable with that lateral lunge.
- ⊙ Next, work on 12 o'clock the same way.
- ⊙ Then work on 6 o'clock (stepping backward).
- ⊙ Expand from there.
- ⊙ Have participants walk around to the other side of their chair. Talk about clock positions they will use on this side.
- ⊙ Work on lunges out to 3 o'clock first. (The upper half of the clock is sideways and forward stepping; the lower half is backward stepping, which is more of a balance challenge.)
- ⊙ Participants will step to clock time, and then push on that leg to bring it back to the center of the imaginary clock.
- ⊙ Ask if they felt the lift they got from the push (it's like floating back to center).
- ⊙ Work on lunges to 1 o'clock and 5 o'clock, repeating each hour a few times until they are comfortable with it.

Take It Further »

- ⊙ Do more repetitions to each hour on the clock.
- ⊙ Use greater knee bending and weight transfers when stepping to each point on the clock.
- ⊙ Include movements that go from the top of the clock to the bottom without returning to center.

Give It More Balance »

- ⊙ Change numbers more quickly.
- ⊙ Vary the timing or speed of your calls.
- ⊙ Vary the spacing between hours (imagine the clock is much bigger).
- ⊙ Add opposite-arm reaching past the stepping knee with each step to facilitate counter-rotation.
 - They need to be comfortable without both hands on the chair and supervised closely.
 - When reaching sideways (1 o'clock through 4 o'clock and 7 o'clock through 11 o'clock), they should reach with the opposite hand.
- ⊙ Play Rock Around the Clock. Lunge to noon, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and back up; then repeat without returning to the center. Repeat once or twice and then do the other side.
- ⊙ For able participants, use diagonal movements or call numbers from either side of the clock.

- Add dual tasks. Mix up the names of the positions to make them think and react. What time do they take their first medicines? What time is their local news? What's their youngest grandchild's age? When is their nap time? How many letters are in their name?
- Dim the lights.

Keep It Safe »

Watch your group closely and pace the movements so everyone can keep up and feel safe. Don't be too quick or wild—you're not trying to tie-up their legs or play Twister. The goal is to practice and master everyday transitions. Keep participants close to their chair or handrail for balance safety.